

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Alexandria Division

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

FARHAAD RIYAZ,

*Defendant.*

Criminal No. 1:21-cr-264-LMB

Count 1: 18 U.S.C. §§ 1341, 2 (Mail Fraud)

Forfeiture Notice

**CRIMINAL INFORMATION**

**COUNT 1**

Mail Fraud  
(18 U.S.C. § 1341)

The United States Attorney charges that:

**GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

At all times material to this Criminal Information, unless stated otherwise:

1. Amazon.com, Inc. ("Amazon") is a corporation headquartered in Seattle, Washington, that among its many other business ventures operates a large national and international on-line marketplace, which includes distribution centers that serve customers in the Eastern District of Virginia, and elsewhere.

2. Amazon's on-line customers used an email address to obtain an Amazon account in order to buy products on-line. Amazon both sells its own products and serves as a platform for approved third-party retailers to sell products to Amazon's customers. Customers may purchase a wide variety of products through Amazon, including computers, widescreen monitors, home



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theater systems, light fixtures, guitars, bicycles, plumbing supplies such as high-end electronic toilets with bidets, and other items.

3. Amazon's on-line customers may use the Amazon.com website or an Amazon mobile phone or tablet application to select, purchase and arrange delivery of products. Customers typically pay for the products through personal or business credit cards associated with the customer's Amazon account. Customers may also use Amazon gift cards to pay and/or to receive refunds.

4. Amazon ships products to customers through various means, including the United States Postal Service, and private and commercial interstate carriers, such as the United Parcel Service ("UPS") and Amazon's own delivery network and vehicles.

5. Amazon's customers may return items to Amazon for a refund for a variety of reasons, including if a product arrives late, fails to arrive, is defective, or otherwise does not match the seller's description. Customers typically contact Amazon on-line to initiate the return process. Customers must indicate a legitimate reason why the items are being returned. If a return is approved, Amazon will typically provide the customer a full refund as well as a return shipping label to facilitate the customer's return shipment. Amazon may refund the customer's purchase price immediately in advance of Amazon's receipt of the returned product. The refund amount is made using the payment method connected to the customer's account. In instances of an advance refund, Amazon provides customer refund with the good faith expectation that the customer will, in fact, promptly ship the returned item back to Amazon. If the customer fails to send the product back, Amazon will bill the payment method on the account.

6. At various times during the scheme described below, Defendant FARHAAD RIYAZ resided in Illinois, Michigan, Washington, D.C., and in McLean, Virginia, in the Eastern

District of Virginia.

**THE SCHEME AND ITS OBJECT**

7. From in or about March 2017 to in or about June 2020, in the Eastern District of Virginia and elsewhere, the defendant, FARHAAD RIYAZ, devised, knowingly intended to devise, and executed and attempted to execute, a scheme and artifice to defraud Amazon and its on-line retailers, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, by making misrepresentations concerning, among other things, the delivery of the products he purchased, the condition of the products he purchased, and would at various times return substitute products of substantially lower value than the items he had purchased from the on-line retailer and had retained, while concealing the material fact from the on-line retailer that he had retained the original, high-end product.

**MANNER AND MEANS**

8. To execute the above-described scheme, defendant FARHAAD RIYAZ would open multiple on-line accounts with Amazon. Even after Amazon warned RIYAZ that it had closed certain of his accounts for violating its Conditions of Use agreement, RIYAZ opened new accounts and continued executing the scheme.

9. RIYAZ would open and maintain multiple email accounts and use multiple credit cards to conduct the scheme to defraud through his various Amazon accounts.

10. Defendant RIYAZ would purchase high-end products through Amazon and its third-party retailers, who would then mail the products to RIYAZ at one of his delivery addresses, including addresses in the Eastern District of Virginia. These addresses included RIYAZ's home or another designated address associated with RIYAZ.

11. After the products arrived, RIYAZ would initiate the return process with Amazon by claiming the products arrived late, never arrived at all, arrived only in part, were defective, or

some other allowable reason under Amazon's return policies.

12. Amazon would refund the purchase price to RIYAZ, but RIYAZ would fraudulently retain the high-end product.

13. At times, RIYAZ would return to the on-line retailer a much less expensive or inferior product that appeared to resemble the high-end product that RIYAZ had retained. For instance, RIYAZ would purchase rare or limited-edition guitars for thousands of dollars each and return an item similar in shape or color, but that cost substantially less.

#### ACTS IN FURTHERANCE OF THE SCHEME

14. In furtherance of the scheme to defraud, defendant FARHAAD RIYAZ committed the following acts, among others, in the Eastern District of Virginia, and elsewhere, all dates being on or about the date indicated and all dollar amounts being approximate:

##### Sony 4K HDR Laser Home Theater Video Projector

15. On July 20, 2019, RIYAZ ordered a Sony 4K HDR Laser Home Theater Video Projector (Model # VPLVW995ES) for \$37,097.88, paying with his Chase Sapphire Reserve Visa credit card. On July 25, 2019 UPS shipped the product to RIYAZ at an address in Manassas, Virginia, in the Eastern District of Virginia.

16. On August 1, 2019, RIYAZ claimed the item arrived too late and Amazon gave him a return authorization to return the item.

17. RIYAZ shipped a significantly less expensive item back to Amazon via UPS on August 15, 2019, and Amazon refunded RIYAZ's Chase Sapphire Reserve credit card \$37,097.88.

18. It was later discovered that the item RIYAZ returned to Amazon was actually a Sony 1080p 3D SXRD Home Theater/Gaming Projector (Model # VPLHW40ES) with a retail price of around \$2,000.

19. On June 2, 2020, during the execution of a search warrant at the residence of RIYAZ in McLean, Virginia, Fairfax County detectives found the Sony 4K HDR Laser Home Theater Video Projector (VPLVW995ES) in the residence.

Toto Toilets with Bidets

20. On September 14, 2019, RIYAZ ordered four TOTO MS989CUMFG#01 Neorest AH Dual Flush 1.0 or 0.8 GPF Toilet with Integrated Bidet Seat and EWATER from Amazon for \$4,462.08 each, for a total of over \$17,000. Amazon fulfilled three of the four orders in full and one of the four orders in part and, between October 15 and 23, 2019, charged Riyaz the full purchase price on his Platinum Delta Sky Miles American Express card.

21. Three of the four toilets with bidets were fully shipped to RIYAZ's residence in McLean, Virginia. The last toilet with bidet was partially shipped to his residence.

22. RIYAZ then requested that Amazon refund his purchase price for all four toilets with bidets, claiming two of the toilets differed from their website description, the third was defective or did not work properly, and the fourth never arrived at all, even though he received part of the product.

23. Amazon ultimately refunded RIYAZ the full purchase price for all four toilets with bidets. Between November 6-14, 2019, Amazon refunded RIYAZ's Platinum Delta Sky Miles American Express card over \$17,000 in aggregate, consisting of four credits of \$4,462.08.

24. On June 2, 2020, during the execution of a search warrant at the residence of RIYAZ in McLean, Virginia, Fairfax County detectives located the four Toto toilets and associated boxes they had been packaged in.

Acer 27" Touchscreen Widescreen Monitor

25. On December 15, 2019, RIYAZ purchased an Acer T272HUL 27-inch WQHD

Touch Screen Widescreen Monitor through Amazon, charging \$797.55 to his Platinum Delta Sky Miles American Express card. Amazon delivered the item to RIYAZ at his residence in McLean, Virginia, through Amazon's private and commercial network with an Amazon tracking number.

26. On December 21, 2019, RIYAZ obtained an Amazon return authorization claiming the product that arrived had an inaccurate website description.

27. RIYAZ returned to Amazon what he purported to be the Acer Widescreen monitor via UPS. It was later discovered that RIYAZ had returned a used Peloton monitor, instead.

28. On or about January 11, 2020, Amazon refunded the \$797.55 purchase price to an Amazon gift card.

#### Guitars and Other Items

29. On June 16, 2019, RIYAZ purchased an American-made Fender Rarities Flame Maple Top Stratocaster Electric Guitar for \$2,649.99 through Amazon from a third-party seller and caused it to be shipped via UPS to an address in Manassas, Virginia. RIYAZ sought a refund and returned a significantly less expensive Indonesian-made Fender Squier Stratocaster electric guitar with a retail value of several hundred dollars, yet received a refund of the full \$2,649.99 purchase price of the Fender Rarities guitar. RIYAZ operated the same scheme with respect to other high-end Fender, Gibson and Martin electrical and acoustic guitars.

#### EXECUTION OF THE MAIL FRAUD SCHEME

30. On or about July 25, 2019, in the Eastern District of Virginia and elsewhere, for the purpose of executing and attempting to execute the above-described scheme and artifice to defraud, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, the defendant,

FARHAAD RIYAZ,

did knowingly cause to be deposited any matter or thing whatever to be sent by any private and commercial interstate carrier, to wit: a package containing a Sony 4K HDR Laser Home Theater Video Projector (Model # VPLVW995ES) delivered via UPS to Manassas, Virginia.

(In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1341 and 2.)



**Forfeiture Notice**

**THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FURTHER ALLEGES FORFEITURE OF  
PROPERTY AS DESCRIBED HEREIN**

Pursuant to Rule 32.2(a) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the defendant, FARHAAD RIYAZ, is hereby notified that if convicted of the offense listed in Count 1 of the Information, the defendant, FARHAAD RIYAZ, shall forfeit to the United States, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), any property, real or personal, which constitutes or is derived from proceeds traceable to the violation.

The assets subject to forfeiture include, but are not limited to, the following: all fraud-related property seized from RIYAZ's residence by Fairfax County Police during a search on June 2, 2020, representing the proceeds the defendant obtained from the mail fraud scheme. In addition, by the time of sentencing, if RIYAZ has not made payment of no less than \$312,964.38 in restitution, the assets subject to forfeiture shall include a monetary judgment for the full restitution amount less any restitution already paid.

Pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p), as incorporated by Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), the defendant shall forfeit to the United States any other property, up to the value of the property described above, if by any act or omission of the defendant, the property subject to forfeiture:

- a. cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- b. has been transferred, sold to, or deposited with a third party;
- c. has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the Court;
- d. has been substantially diminished in value; or
- e. has been commingled with other property which cannot be divided without difficulty.


(In accordance with Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C), Title 28 United States Code, Section 2461(c); Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p); and Rule 32.2(a), Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.)

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica D. Aber  
United States Attorney

Date: *13 December 2021*

By:

  
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Russell L. Carlberg  
Assistant United States Attorney

Wm. W. W.

18 December 2021